

**TT No.85: Mike Latham** - Sat 5 November 2011: **Fauldhouse United** v Port Glasgow Athletic; Scottish Junior Cup 2nd Rd; Result: 6-1; Attendance: 160 (h/c); Admission: £5; Programme: £1; Raffle ticket: £1; FGIF Match Rating: 3\*.

It's another Junior Cup Saturday and the weather is mercifully brighter and drier on the journey north; last week's postponed tie between Fauldhouse and Port Glasgow has got the green light at the second attempt and my intended destination the previous Saturday is now the game of the day.

Fauldhouse is an old mining village, perched high on the moors just across the border from Lanarkshire in West Lothian. Its altitude is just a smidgeon short of 800ft, a bleak place in the depths of winter for sure, but despite early morning frost the sun is shining and there's no sign of the fog and mist patches that are lingering all over southern Scotland.

Fauldhouse United are in border territory in the Juniors; they play in the East Juniors, even though their nearest rivals, Shotts Bon Accord, a few miles to the west are in the West section. They moved to their present ground at Park View in the late 1960s, leaving behind their old gravel pitch at West End Park, close to the railway station.

The ground was reclaimed from old colliery land, landscaped on three sides by trees and backing on to a forest at the north-west part of the village, close to a housing estate. The playing area, which dips towards the nearside club house that incorporates dressing rooms and changing rooms, has been extensively rolled and looks in good condition. There's a real sense of anticipation as both teams perform their pre-match routines.

With the changing of the clocks last week's 2-30pm start has been brought forward half-an-hour and that catches out a few of the locals who arrive with the game underway. Fauldhouse produce a basic 12-page programme and also have an immaculate tea bar with Bovril, Scotch pies and square sausage in a bun seemingly the best sellers.

The ground is basic, but more than adequate with a small terraced covered standing area on the halfway line providing the best vantage point. The far side has several rows of terracing though viewing is difficult due to the sun. With the trees providing a nice enclosed feel and providing a welcome windshield there's an intimate feel to the ground. The south side, behind the nearside goal, has a large fence that protects the cars parked on the social club car park from misplaced shots and crosses.

At certain times during the season, a friendly local informs me, the ground is a haven for midges and the elevated and exposed location make the park prone to frosts; but there are no concerns this afternoon.

On the face of it the two sides are evenly matched and the visitors, who have brought a good few committee men and supporters look the better side in the opening exchanges. Something against the run of play the home side take the lead just after the half-hour mark with an excellent goal, a first time shot from a pinpoint left-wing cross; that's the talking point at pie and Bovril time.

Two goals in four minutes just after the hour-mark leave Fauldhouse in command; thereafter what was a highly competitive and intriguing encounter becomes a rout. The home side add three more goals and might have several more, though the visitors do grab a late consolation.

Fauldhouse also is home to one of Scotland's oldest cricket clubs, formed in 1855 and based at nearby Victoria Road. They enjoyed a highly successful season in 2011, winning every game in the East of Scotland League. A brief visit to their ground rounds off another rewarding visit to the Junior Cup before, with dusk rapidly descending, the route back to the M74 and the journey south is safely negotiated.

It's a tradition in the Junior Cup for the visitors to be entertained after the game; Fauldhouse repair to the miners' welfare where the hospitality, I was assured is legendary. Despite the result I had a sneaking feeling that I got home back to Lancashire sooner than the players and officials from Port Glasgow because Fauldhouse seemed a football club with a real soul. Highly recommended.

07/20